

Carson (Gov.)

A M E M O I R

OF

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

JAMES B. ROGERS, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
PENNSYLVANIA.

BY

✓
JOSEPH CARSON, M.D.,
PROFESSOR OF MATERIA MEDICA AND PHARMACY IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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DELIVERED BY REQUEST OF THE FACULTY, OCTOBER 11, 1852,  
AND PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

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1852.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

October 14, 1852.

A MEETING of the Class was held for the purpose of requesting for publication the Introductory Lectures of the Professors. Mr. James N. M. Lynch, of Tennessee, being called to the Chair, and Mr. F. H. Babbitt, of Mississippi, being appointed Secretary, a Committee was appointed to carry out the intention of the meeting, consisting of one from each State or Province, as follows:—

SAMUEL J. ARRINGTON, <i>Alabama.</i>	EDWARD S. SHARP, <i>New Jersey.</i>
J. C. F. HUNTER, <i>Arkansas.</i>	E. K. SEELEY, <i>New York.</i>
G. T. B. KEMP, <i>Bahamas.</i>	LAFAYETTE HUSSEY, <i>North Carolina.</i>
JOHN A. MOORE, <i>Delaware.</i>	E. H. ROBINSON, <i>Nova Scotia.</i>
WILLIAM J. L'ENGLE, <i>Florida.</i>	L. H. GARRARD, <i>Ohio.</i>
JOHN C. FOSTER, <i>Georgia.</i>	ADDISON ARTHURS, <i>Pennsylvania.</i>
G. G. GROVES, <i>Kentucky.</i>	WILLIAM H. WATSON, <i>Rhode Island.</i>
H. P. GUILBEAU, <i>Louisiana.</i>	J. F. BUTLER, <i>South Carolina.</i>
SAMUEL R. BIRD, <i>Maryland.</i>	EMMET WOODWARD, <i>Tennessee.</i>
THOS. E. VICK, <i>Mississippi.</i>	G. P. TERRELL, <i>Virginia.</i>
FREDERICK BATES, <i>Missouri.</i>	THOS. J. EASTMAN, <i>Wisconsin.</i>

CORRESPONDENCE.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

October 16, 1852.

DEAR SIR: The undersigned—a special committee to whom the duty has been delegated of requesting for publication a copy of your able and eloquent Eulogy upon the Life and Character of our late lamented Professor, JAMES B. ROGERS—while communicating the wish of the Class, desire at the same time to add our personal solicitation that you will accede to the request. A compliance with the wish expressed through us will be not only a manifestation of your kindness to us, but a gratification to the relatives and friends of him whose merits have been commemorated by you.

With high esteem, we remain your ob't serv'ts,

SAMUEL J. ARRINGTON,
J. C. F. HUNTER,
THOMAS E. VICK.

DR. J. CARSON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,

October 21, 1852.

GENTLEMEN: I cheerfully accede to the request of the Class, expressed through you, that the Memoir of the Life and Character of the late Prof. ROGERS be placed at its disposal for publication, well knowing how grateful to his numerous friends must be a tribute to the memory of our lamented colleague.

With the highest esteem, I am your ob't serv't,

J. CARSON.

To Messrs. ARRINGTON, HUNTER, and VICK, *Committee.*

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MEMOIR.

It was a custom of antiquity for each passer to cast a stone upon the heap which marked the resting-place of some fellow-mortal, with whom life's journey was at an end, and who, liberated from the care, the toil, and the anxiety incident to the world's concerns, there quietly reposed. Such a custom, while indicative of honor for the dead, was productive of emotion in the living, and, originating in those sentiments of the human heart which are innate, requiring but suggestive circumstances to call them forth, was eminently salutary. If barbaric nations thus cherished by exercise the finer feelings of humanity, and by a simple demonstration evinced their influence, how expedient and becoming is it for us, who acknowledge their supremacy, and profess to be controlled by them, to turn aside from our engrossing occupations, and resign ourselves to their indulgence.

A tribute paid to the memory of the departed is an acknowledgment on the part of those who make it, and of those who are impressed by it, that they, too, are mortal; it brings home to the bosom the conviction that what has been the lot of the possessor of virtues, talents, accomplishments, and reputation, is the destiny of each individual; it touches

the chord which vibrates between this state of existence and another, and sets before the mind the responsibility inseparable from the part which has been assigned to every one.

But while softening the passions and awakening convictions, lessons of encouragement and hopeful anticipation may be communicated by it. It teaches that in the affairs of life there is no vacuity, as the places which have been vacated must again be filled; and that, as succession is inevitable, so long as the machinery of society shall continue in operation, sooner or later he who improves his talent will be called upon to exercise it; and no matter whether his light shines brilliantly, supported by the material which genius can supply, or sheds around a calm and uniform illumination, he will be an ornament and benefactor to his race who, in his day and generation, well fills the station to which by Providence he has been appointed.

The history of every man's life who has been prominent is a record of the steps by which he has attained advancement; an exposition of the impulses and motives by which he has been guided; a detail of his trials and difficulties; and an elucidation of those qualities which have marked his character. With deferential hands the veil may be lifted which shrouds the features of the dead, and from their contemplation, rigid and inexpressive as they seem, reflections may be educed which are consolatory and profitable. History, whether applied to nations or confined to circles in society, teaches by examples.

The mournful duty has been committed to me, by those who but so lately have been his colleagues, of commemorating the merits of one who, while living, largely secured

sentiments of attachment and respect from them, and whose name, now that he has been removed, is invested with hallowed recollections. Before no class of individuals could a tribute to the memory of an honored officer of this Institution be more appropriately presented, than of those who have assumed the close relation of her pupils; among whom are to be found his personal friends and warm admirers. To myself, the task I have undertaken may be said to be a work of love; for, although abler hands might have executed it, yet deeper feelings could not have been enlisted in it.

JAMES B. ROGERS, late Professor of Chemistry in the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, was born in the city of Philadelphia on the 22d of February, A. D. 1803.

He was the oldest son of Dr. Patrick Kerr Rogers, who, at an early age, emigrated to this country in 1791. This gentleman belonged to that class which in the United States is so well known and appreciated as the Scotch Irish—a race of men possessed of strong minds, of iron constitution, and indomitable energy; who as early settlers contributed greatly to the extension of a civilized domain into the primeval forest, and who, by the diffusion of the learning, the science, and the religion which they brought with them, throughout the community of their adoption, promoted its advancement. From an early period of our country's existence, members of this class, or their descendants, have been distinguished either as brave defenders of her national rights, as statesmen who have directed her policy, and legislated for her prosperity, or as scholars who have aided her literary and intellectual progress. The State of Pennsylvania, the

City of Philadelphia, the University with which we are connected are under especial obligations to them.

Soon after his arrival, the youthful emigrant was employed as an usher in the literary department of the University of Pennsylvania; but his inclinations directed him towards the medical profession, and having pursued his studies in the office of Professor Barton, he graduated as Doctor of Medicine in 1802. The thesis which he presented was an experimental one on the chemical and medicinal properties of the *Liriodendron tulipifera*. While yet a young practitioner of the healing art, he exhibited his devotion to the science by giving in successive years a course of lectures upon the "History of Medicine and Medical Philosophy;" but subsequently more especially devoted himself to chemistry, upon which subject he gave, as we have reason to believe, the first complete series of lectures to a general or popular audience ever given in this city, or probably in the country. These, according to the statement of one who recollects them, were well received, and highly successful. In 1819, he was appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry in William and Mary College, at Williamsburg, Virginia, as the successor of Professor Hare, and there remained assiduously devoted to the cultivation and teaching of those sciences until his death in 1828.

As a teacher, the elder Dr. Rogers is stated to have been clear and impressive; remarkable for the range and extension of his philosophical views, in some of which he anticipated the advances of the present day, and was singularly happy in the ingenuity with which he devised from the

simplest materials the means of experiment, and in the skill of his manipulations.

This exposition of the father's tastes, pursuits, and abilities is not only interesting, but important, as it reveals at once the origin and source from which proceed the corresponding bias and future direction of the son. The soil, on which springs any tender plant, will qualify its growth by the nourishment afforded it; and the scion, even when separated from the parent stock, partakes largely of its nature; yet, when that scion is sustained and nourished by a soil teeming with materials of vigor, furnished through the parent channels, it expands, flourishes, and fructifies luxuriantly.

This paternal influence and training was not confined to the eldest of his sons; and attention may here be directed to the fact that all of them, four in number, became the incumbents of scientific offices among the most important in the country. The youngest is the successor of his brother.

In early life, the lamented subject of our notice was characterized by great sprightliness and extreme sensibility; he acquired with readiness what was taught him, but exhibited a greater zest for that instruction which he received from his social sports, and from the contemplation of nature, which he enjoyed and loved exceedingly. Indeed, throughout his life he was noted for his quick observation of natural phenomena, and the delight with which, in connection with physical laws, he dwelt upon them. As a boy, he took the utmost pleasure in chemical manipulations, became habituated to them, and, from experiments conducted with his own

little collection of tests and apparatus, became quite familiar with the leading reactions and principles of the science.

It was natural that with such propensities, and such a turn of thought, the science of medicine should be regarded as suited to his inclinations; accordingly, after having concluded his preliminary education at William and Mary College, he entered upon the systematic study of it. His studies were conducted in Baltimore; and, enrolling himself as a pupil of the University of Maryland, whose reputation at the time was maintained and extended by the names of Potter, Davidge, Baker, and De Butts, in 1822, he received the honors of the institution. His thesis was upon Epilepsy.

After his graduation, Dr. Rogers entered upon the practice of medicine in Hartford County, Maryland. But the routine of a country practitioner, probably rendered more irksome by the difficulties which must necessarily be encountered when dealing with the weaknesses, the selfishness, and the recklessness of mankind, to which the physician is, more than any one, exposed, was not consonant to the habits and modes of reflection to which he had resigned himself; the sensitiveness of his disposition was too painfully called forth, and, as I have heard him declare, he found that he was not, by nature, calculated for a practitioner of medicine. In a few years, he returned to Baltimore, and had not long been a resident of that city, before he was solicited by the enterprising manufacturing chemists, Messrs. Tyson and Ellicott, to take charge of their extensive works, as scientific superintendent. The field now was open to him for the enjoyment of those tendencies which, arising at an early age under the immediate example and

encouragement of his father, were fostered and strengthened by the lessons of De Butts. By accepting the appointment, he abandoned himself to the pursuit of chemistry, and laid the foundation of that reputation for skill and dexterity of manipulation, which, as an experimenter, he subsequently enjoyed.

The attractiveness of chemical science can only be understood by those whose minds are deeply impressed by the wonders of physical creation, and who fully recognize the existence of causes which, though undreamed of by the vast majority of mankind, are productive of phenomena that are daily presented. The inquiry is seldom made by the ordinary observer, as to the source of results which may attract attention by their beauty, or contribute to comfort and gratification by their utility. The exhibition of a natural law, which, by its operation, produces a tumultuous or brilliant effect upon the senses, may excite admiration; but proof of the slow and silent influence of forces which, constantly in action, are modifying the very face of nature, is unattractive; and he is frequently viewed as an enthusiast, or an idler, who spends his time in developing it. Davy was regarded as an incorrigible boy, who spent his hours in a garret performing chemical experiments, instead of preparing medicines in the surgery; and Scheele—the detection of whose genius Bergman rated as the greatest of his own discoveries—bore reproaches and even chastisement for neglecting the duties of his profession, while he devoted the whole of his time to chemistry.

The advantages, moreover, derived from the cultivation of chemical science are appreciated in mass, and sympathy with those who are engaged in the evolution of truths is

circumscribed to a kindred few. The amount of pleasure accruing from research cannot be communicated, and the individual addicted to it must necessarily lead an abstracted existence. Still, the satisfaction of establishing facts and prosecuting discovery is the highest to which the intellect can attain. Cavendish pursued the course he loved most, although possessing ample means of luxurious indulgence.

The department of chemistry to which, from his position at the head of a large establishment, Dr. Rogers now sedulously devoted himself, has assumed great importance to the interests of mankind. There is hardly an art or occupation in which it is not felt, whether promoting the enjoyment, adding to the elegances, or alleviating the miseries of life. Our own profession is infinitely indebted to it for the means of carrying into effect its benevolent intentions. We can, therefore, understand that an ardent temperament and active spirit should zealously enter upon the discharge of duties which were congenial.

Here, in organizing and conducting the various processes according to the suggestions of the most advanced chemical knowledge, he had extensive opportunities for the cultivation of his favorite science, and for perfecting himself in its important practical details. His close application to minutiae was felt in the improved modes of conducting several of the operations, and his services were highly valued by the principals of the establishment. But the necessity which was entailed upon him of exposure to atmospherical impurities was detrimental to his health, and perhaps contributed to after suffering.

While occupying the post of Superintendent of the Baltimore Chemical Works, the offer was tendered to him of

the Chair of Chemistry in the Washington Medical College of Baltimore. His modesty and self-distrust were such, that, notwithstanding his perfect competency to fill it, from his great familiarity with the subject, he with difficulty was prevailed upon to accept of this appointment, fearing, as he stated, that he would not have the fluency requisite to make a successful teacher. How forcible an illustration of the fact that our "doubts are traitors"—that we may err when distrusting our capabilities! If there was one quality for which, in after life, he was remarkable, it was fluency of utterance. To convince him that he had nothing to apprehend on that score, his brother William prevailed upon him to accompany him to the lecture-room, and there, placing the future professor behind the desk, constituted himself the audience; the theme was named, which being instantly taken up and amplified upon, the ease and fulness with which he spoke relieved him of his diffidence and apprehension. This was his first effort to lecture, and, like this, all his future performances were without notes or facilities of recollection, except those incident to the arrangement of the topic. It was in connection with the school where his maiden essay as a teacher was made that he laid the foundation of a reputation which remained with him to the last term of his career.

Though not stimulated by the presence of a large class, nor deriving adequate remuneration for his efforts, his enthusiasm and conscientiousness sustained him in the zealous and faithful performance of his duties; and the strongest corroborative testimony has been given by contemporary chemists and teachers, that "his uniformly successful experi-

ments, and his eloquent and instructive lectures, were always highly appreciated by the gentlemen of his class."

These were, nevertheless, not the only labors in which he was engaged. He delivered lectures upon chemistry before the Mechanics' Institute, and was further occupied in original investigations, with the late Professor W. R. Fisher, upon the methods of testing for arsenic; and afterwards with James Green, in an examination of the laws of the Elementary Galvanic Battery, the results of which were published in the scientific journals of the day.

Soon after the removal of Dr. Rogers to Baltimore, in the year 1830, he entered into a matrimonial alliance with Rachel Smith, towards whom he entertained the tenderest attachment, and to whom, in the subsequent difficulties and trials he encountered, he was much indebted for support and solace. This union was productive of much domestic happiness. Two sons and a daughter survive him.

In 1835, the medical department of the Cincinnati College was organized, under the auspices of the distinguished Western advocate of medical advancement, Dr. Daniel Drake. Competent men were sought for to promote the undertaking, and the success and reputation of Dr. Rogers directed attention to him as presenting the highest qualities for the Chair of Chemistry and Pharmacy, to which he was appointed. In this situation he continued during the four succeeding years; and with respect to the manner in which he sustained himself, and the sentiments entertained towards him, strong, nay, enthusiastic testimonials have been given by his colleagues, now among the most prominent men of the profession. I may be permitted to quote from one in particular; it is the statement of the veteran pro-

fessor whose name has just been mentioned: "During the four winters that he lectured in the school, he acquitted himself, both in his prelections and experiments, to the entire satisfaction of the class. Indeed, I ought rather to say to their admiration; and at the same time he was personally one of the most popular members of the Faculty."

During the summers of his connection with the Cincinnati school, he was occupied in assisting his brother, Professor W. B. Rogers, of the University of Virginia, who had charge of the geological survey of that State, and was engaged both in the labors of the field and in chemical analysis.

When in Cincinnati, the post of melter and refiner in the Branch Mint at New Orleans was tendered to him by the President of the United States, at the recommendation of the Director of the Mint in Philadelphia. This offer, so complimentary to his talents and skill as a chemist, though highly appreciated, was declined.

In 1839, the Cincinnati College terminated its operations, from circumstances with which Dr. Rogers had no connection; principally, however, as is understood, from several of its prominent professors accepting appointments in other schools. In 1840, he took up his abode in this his native city, which continued to be his home until his decease.

After removing to Philadelphia, he was first occupied in rendering that assistance to his brother, Henry D. Rogers, the geologist of the State of Pennsylvania, which he had done in Virginia, and was engaged in the field as well as in the laboratory. His leisure seasons were employed in giving private instruction to medical students, in the form of recapitulatory lectures and examinations. In 1841, the

changes which occurred in the Philadelphia Medical Institute opened the way for the more prominent exhibition of his powers as a lecturer in this community. He was chosen to succeed Professor J. K. Mitchell, who for many years had been distinguished for his interesting and attractive mode of teaching chemistry. In this position expectation was not disappointed, and henceforth Dr. Rogers was regarded as worthy the highest position pertaining to his branch.

The summer school was founded by Professor Chapman, and, always maintaining respectability and usefulness, has been the means of offering to the younger medical aspirants the opportunity and the encouragement to cultivate special departments of medical science, and to acquire strength and efficiency in teaching. It has been especially a school of practice for professorial duties, sustained by the proper ambition and enthusiasm of those who have been desirous of acquiring reputation, and of meriting advancement. There are many individuals possessing elevated position, at the present time, who are indebted to it for their prosperity; but it has little requited, by pecuniary emolument, the labor and the time devoted to it. Dr. Rogers, when accepting this appointment, was no longer youthful; he had a family depending upon him for support and education, yet withal he was as zealous and indefatigable as any of his associates. Perhaps this was the most painful and trying period of his life.

Important, nay, indispensable as science is to the prosperity of the human race, he who is most competent to prosecute and to promote it is often forced to struggle against personal discouragements. Success in rendering it avail-

able for support depends upon contingencies, and frequently a life is almost passed in securing the mere necessities of existence. Like literature, science has been cultivated for its own sake; and happy is it that its fascinations afford some recompense for the inconvenience, or even sufferings with which it may be accompanied. For seven successive years our lamented colleague preserved his courage and his hopes. Through this period I knew him intimately, and with me, as well as others of his friends, he elicited peculiar interest. He had never been eminently prosperous. Bright anticipations had dawned upon him; but, hitherto, they were destined to be dissipated. His cheerfulness, his uniform gentleness and kindness of disposition, his moderation of expression, and sense of justice to the merits of those more fortunate, secured affection and respect. He yielded not to despondency, and no opportunity was lost to render available, means by which he might be useful, or which would further his plans of ultimate success. For two successive winters he lectured in the Franklin Institute, and was ever ready to embrace the chances presented of making his knowledge subservient to industrial purposes.

As clouds and murkiness are not destined to envelope permanently the prospects of nature, so, in human events, obscurity and gloom do not perpetually invest the lives of individuals; and he who is true to himself and the high destiny to which he is appointed, may have greater zest given to his prosperity by the want of it which has preceded. A brighter day was in store for our friend. In 1847, while connected with the Franklin College, a new and promising institution, to which he had contributed strength,

the Chair of Chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania became vacant by the resignation of Professor Hare.

The canvass for this place was a spirited one; the candidates were numerous and prominent before the country; the place itself had been illustrated with an ability which had given to it renown. Rogers had secured to himself the earnest wishes in his behalf, and the partialities of the profession, who best know the qualifications desirable for a medical school; and he became the successor of the same eminent individual to whom his father had succeeded, twenty-eight years previously. From this sole incident, how gratifying a result!

To speak, before so many witnesses of his efforts, of the manner in which Professor Rogers performed the duties of the appointment, and fully justified the confidence of those who advocated his cause, and of the Honorable Board who trusted to him, would appear to be unnecessary; but I conceive my duty would be but half performed were it omitted. That he was destined to acquire popularity, was evident from the commencement of his connection with the school; this was sustained until the close of his career. The reason is apparent: As an instructor, he was honest. The full storehouse of his mind was drawn upon to instruct his pupils, and no pains nor labor did he spare himself to make easy to their comprehension the important truths he taught. The manner which he exhibited, from its impressiveness, proved that he felt the necessity of the information which was communicated, and the language employed to clothe his thoughts, when warming with his subject, arose to eloquence. The explanations and reasoning which were given,

were clear and lucid; while the illustrations which accompanied them were marked by dexterity and skill. In the lecture-room, could he be otherwise than popular? The ever attentive and gently breathing audiences who listened to him attest he was so.

There was one portion of his course on which he was especially interesting—I mean Organic Chemistry. Of late years, this has become a very prominent department, from the success with which it has been cultivated by numerous inquirers, at the head of whom stands the illustrious Liebig. It has commenced, and ultimately will be so interwoven with medicine as to require the larger share of attention from medical students.

It is no longer sufficient to be aware that certain principles, or organic compounds, exist as components of the system; they must be studied, not only by themselves, but in their metamorphoses, in their relation to each other, or to new principles generated in health or in disease. Formative or nutrient, disintegrant or destructive actions are closely dependent upon them; for, as has been remarked by a recent writer, “the more we know of the processes going on in the economy, the more do we find these to involve strictly chemical changes, and to be capable of a chemical interpretation.”

But physiology and pathology are not the only branches to which organic chemistry is essential. Therapeutics is gradually becoming amenable to its disclosures. Over the operation of some medicines, there has hitherto been impenetrable mystery; they could solely be studied in their palpable effects, and the application of them be guided by experience alone. The development of the mode of action,

to which organic chemistry has led, has dissipated much uncertainty, and explained many phenomena, which, although seen, were not understood. By demonstrating the importance of researches connected with the subject, and creating an interest in them, the late Professor of Chemistry bestowed important service, and it was apparent that, in its reaction upon other branches, his mode of teaching materially aided the exertions of his associates.

The physical organization of Professor Rogers was not originally robust; his frame was light and elastic; but in latter years, his constitution might be regarded as delicate. As has been mentioned, from exposure to deleterious agents, a shock was given to his system when superintending the Baltimore Chemical Works; and this was to a greater or less extent maintained by close confinement and the nature of his labors in the laboratory of the lecture-room; yet it was partially counteracted by a sojourn in the purer air of the country during a portion of the summer seasons. For some time it had been remarked by his friends that the wear of life was making inroads on his constitution; and it was known that at periods he was a sufferer from nervous exhaustion and defective nutrition of his organs.

During the last session, his strength was greatly impaired, and with difficulty he struggled on in the performance of his duties. The marks of disease became too distinct to admit of any other opinion than that a serious malady had marked him as a victim. By his own experiment the truth became established that he labored under Albuminuria. The disease steadily advanced. Scarcely had the labors of the year been terminated, before he was confined to bed; and from this, again he rose not. It was apparent

to his medical attendants, from the first recognition of the malady, that hope of restoration was groundless; that the angel of death too surely had aimed his dart; and that the career on earth of our colleague would speedily be closed. Although much suffering had been the companion of his sickness, which he bore with patient fortitude, his last days were calm; and with a full conviction of his condition, resigned to the decrees of the Almighty, with Christian hope, he yielded up his spirit without a struggle on June 15, 1852.

As a teacher, we have spoken of the popularity of Professor Rogers; he was, moreover, an object of affectionate regard to those who knew his social worth. Disinterested and generous in his relations with the world, mild and conciliating in deportment, open and affable when approached, urbane to every one, his virtues shone conspicuously within the circle of his friends. With his pupils he was sympathizing; he entered cheerfully into their discouragements and difficulties; and those who confided to him received that encouragement and counsel so grateful to the student's feelings. He was emphatically the student's friend. In his death, a sore bereavement has befallen us; and we may be permitted to give utterance to our sentiments of sorrow. The grave may conceal from view his mortal lineaments, but they are engraven upon our recollection. A portraiture distinct and vivid, with all the freshness that affection can give to it, will ever be before our mental vision.

To our imagination the land of spirits is a far-off land; but when it is the residence of those who partook greatly of our esteem, how close and intimate are our relations with it! To follow them is the destiny appointed us; and, like

theirs, this limited intelligence which we now possess will expand immeasurably, in an effulgence of light derived immediately from God, where knowledge of Himself and works will be perfected, and where Science, here so groveling, will become a Revelation.